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General and complete disarmament

Letter dated 9 June 1998 from the Permanent Representatives of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a joint declaration on nuclear disarmament adopted by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden and dated 9 June 1998.

We should be grateful if you would have the present letter, together with the annexed joint declaration, issued as a document of the General Assembly, under item 72 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) Celso L. N. **Amorim**
Permanent Representative of Brazil

(*Signed*) Nabil A. **Elaraby**
Permanent Representative of Egypt

(*Signed*) John H. F. **Campbell**
Permanent Representative of Ireland

(*Signed*) Manuel **Tello**
Permanent Representative of Mexico

(*Signed*) Michael John **Powles**
Permanent Representative of New Zealand

(*Signed*) Danilo **Türk**
Permanent Representative of Slovenia

(*Signed*) Khiphusizi J. **Jele**
Permanent Representative of South Africa

(*Signed*) Hans **Dahlgren**
Permanent Representative of Sweden

* A/53/50.

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Annex

[Original: English and Spanish]

Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda

Joint declaration adopted on 9 June 1998 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden, have considered the continuing threat to humanity represented by the perspective of the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States, as well as by those three nuclear-weapons-capable States that have not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the attendant possibility of use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The seriousness of this predicament has been further underscored by the recent nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan.

We fully share the conclusion expressed by the commissioners of the Canberra Commission in their statement that "the proposition that nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never used – accidentally or by decision – defies credibility. The only complete defence is the elimination of nuclear weapons and assurance that they will never be produced again".

We recall that the General Assembly already in January 1946 – in its very first resolution – unanimously called for a commission to make proposals for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". While we can rejoice at the achievement of the international community in concluding total and global prohibitions of chemical and biological weapons by the Conventions of 1972 and 1993, we equally deplore the fact that the countless resolutions and initiatives which have been guided by similar objectives in respect of nuclear weapons in the past half-century remain unfulfilled.

We can no longer remain complacent at the reluctance of the nuclear-weapon States and the three nuclear-weapons-capable States to take that fundamental and requisite step, namely a clear commitment to the speedy, final and total elimination of their nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons capability and we urge them to take that step now.

The vast majority of the membership of the United Nations has entered into legally binding commitments not to receive, manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. These undertakings have been made in the context of the corresponding legally binding commitments by the nuclear-weapon States to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We are deeply concerned at the persistent reluctance of the nuclear-weapon States to approach their treaty obligations as an urgent commitment to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons.

In this connection we recall the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice in its 1996 Advisory Opinion that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The international community must not enter the third millennium with the prospect that the maintenance of these weapons will be considered legitimate for the indefinite future, when the present juncture provides a unique opportunity to eradicate and prohibit them for all time. We therefore call on the Governments of each of the nuclear-weapon States and the three nuclear-weapons-capable States to commit themselves unequivocally to the elimination of their respective nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons capability and to agree to start work immediately on the practical steps and negotiations required for its achievement.

We agree that the measures resulting from such undertakings, leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, will begin with those States that have the largest arsenals. But we also stress the importance that they be joined in a seamless process by those with lesser arsenals at the appropriate juncture. The nuclear-weapon States should immediately begin to consider steps to be taken to this effect.

In this connection we welcome both the achievements to date and the future promise of the START process as an appropriate bilateral, and subsequently plurilateral, mechanism including all the nuclear-weapon States, for the practical dismantlement and destruction of nuclear armaments undertaken in pursuit of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The actual elimination of nuclear arsenals, and the development of requisite verification regimes, will of necessity require time. But there are a number of practical steps that the nuclear-weapon States can, and should, take immediately. We call on them to abandon present hair-trigger postures by proceeding to the de-alerting and de-activating of their weapons. They should also remove non-strategic nuclear weapons from deployed sites. Such measures will create beneficial conditions for continued disarmament efforts and help prevent inadvertent, accidental or unauthorized launches.

In order for the nuclear disarmament process to proceed, the three nuclear-weapons-capable States must clearly and urgently reverse the pursuit of their respective nuclear weapons development or deployment and refrain from any actions which could undermine the efforts of the international community towards nuclear disarmament. We call upon them, and all other States that have not yet done so, to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and take the necessary measures which flow from adherence to this instrument. We likewise call upon them to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay and without conditions.

An international ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (cut-off) would further underpin the process towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. As agreed in 1995 by the States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, negotiations on such a convention should commence immediately.

Disarmament measures alone will not bring about a world free from nuclear weapons. Effective international cooperation to prevent the proliferation of these weapons is vital and must be enhanced through, *inter alia*, the extension of controls over all fissile material and other relevant components of nuclear weapons. The emergence of any new nuclear-weapon State, as well as any non-State entity in a position to produce or otherwise acquire such weapons, seriously jeopardizes the process of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Other measures must also be taken pending the total elimination of nuclear arsenals. Legally binding instruments should be developed with respect to a joint no-first-use undertaking between the nuclear-weapon States and as regards non-use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States, so called negative security assurances.

The conclusion of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as the Antarctic Treaty have steadily excluded nuclear weapons from entire regions of the world. The further pursuit, extension and establishment of such zones, especially in regions of tension, such as the Middle East and South Asia, represents a significant contribution to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

These measures all constitute essential elements which can and should be pursued in parallel: by the nuclear-weapon States among themselves; and by the nuclear-weapon States together with the non-nuclear-weapon States, thus providing a road map towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons will require the underpinnings of a universal and multilaterally negotiated legally binding instrument or a framework encompassing a mutually reinforcing set of instruments.

We, on our part, will spare no efforts to pursue the objectives outlined above. We are jointly resolved to achieve the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. We firmly hold that the determined and rapid preparation for the post-nuclear era must start now.